

BLADE RUNNER

**“I’VE SEEN THINGS
YOU PEOPLE
WOULDN’T BELIEVE...”**

A quarter of a century ago, they held the first test screening of *Blade Runner*. First to emerge was a weary-looking lady. “That is the worst movie I ever saw in my life,” she sneered. Twenty-five years later, it has become one of the most adored and challenging sci-fi movies of all time. To celebrate one birthday, five cuts (including the new “Final Cut”) and endless debates, we give you the greatness of *Blade Runner* as interpreted by those who made it so. Including brand-new interviews with Ridley Scott, Rutger Hauer and Harrison Ford...

Scott mock-throttles his star during a rehearsal for the fight sequence in The Snake Pit.

DANGEROUS DAYS

Ridley Scott on 25 years of Blade Running

WORDS PAUL M. SAMMON



"IT'S HONEST TO SAY THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HARRISON AND MYSELF WASN'T SMOOTH." RIDLEY SCOTT

OF ALL HIS 16 MOVIES AS DIRECTOR, NONE HAS STAYED WITH RIDLEY SCOTT

like *Blade Runner*. You could say it's the picture that defines him; certainly he's described it as his most "personal" film, and without a doubt, it's the one that he comes back to, again and again, in interviews. All conversations with Scott inevitably return to the shadowy streets of *Blade Runner*.

The film still stands as an emotionally challenging, thematically complex work, its ideas and subtexts just as startling as its deeply influential design. It's a haunting, hypnotic, harrowing achievement, its multi-textured ideas subversively embedded in the substructure of what deceptively appears to be a mainstream Hollywood edifice. Yes, *Blade Runner* may be narratively flawed and (at times) precariously self-indulgent, but it also remains one of the truly lustrous jewels in Scott's creative crown, a cinematic milestone whose basic integrity, force of imagination and ideological sophistication radically altered the face of contemporary sci-fi cinema.

The film also continues to draw a strongly supportive audience, who are now eagerly awaiting both Scott's newly edited "Final Cut" version of the film and a deluxe, multi-disc Special Edition DVD release, both set for release next month.

To celebrate *Blade Runner*'s 25th anniversary, *Empire* asked Scott to somehow encapsulate the film that will never leave him...

What prompted you to make the film?

Before I decided to accept *Blade Runner*, I was developing a dark, fantastic adaptation of *Tristan And Isolde*, and I was also committed to producer Dino De Laurentiis to do an adaptation of *Dune*. After dropping out of *Dune*, I got restless and asked [Blade Runner producer Michael] Deeley to show me the latest version of the screenplay. It was an extraordinary piece of work that Hampton Fancher had written, titled *Dangerous Days*.

I was drawn to the moral content, the idea of an officially sanctioned killer murdering what were, after all, really people, even if they were synthetically developed. I was also fascinated by this script's graphic possibilities. *Dangerous Days*

crossbred a *noir* film with a police story with science-fiction, and I could sense a lot of opportunities in that hybrid. *Days* seemed to present the possibility of doing what I called "layering" back then, the building up of carefully chosen details to create a fully imagined world. That excited me.

How do you view the ethical issues of the replicants? They're almost comparable with slaves.

I always felt I'd been a bit fanciful with the underlying concept of the replicants, really. If a society decided to produce a second-class species, that society would also probably develop it with subhuman capabilities. You wouldn't want your twin objecting to your going to its cupboard to remove its kidney. The fact that the replicants in *Blade Runner* are indeed intelligent complicates the situation. You immediately have a huge morality problem.

You infamously had problems with your American crew during the shoot...

Well, I didn't have problems with everyone on the crew. But you know what? I think it might have been something as simple as certain people on the crew not understanding what I was trying to get. Now the world is educated as to special effects and such, but in those days, they didn't know what the fuck I was doing. Which was frustrating, believe me. Also, by the time I made *Blade Runner* I was in overdrive. My company [RSA, for producing commercials] was going great, and I've always thought that that suggested

I knew how to run a business. *Alien* seemed to have conclusively found its audience, too, which you would think would indicate that I know how to craft an entertainment. But by the time I got into *Blade Runner*, I was questioned so often about everything I did or wanted to do that the situation really pissed me off. That's when I became a screamer. I simply got fed up answering stupid questions. Things like, "Why do you want the walls of Taffy Lewis's nightclub painted gold?" "Why the hell have you got a unicorn in this motion picture?" It never stopped. I refused to take it anymore: "This is the way I want it - just DO it!"

You also clashed with Harrison Ford...

I think it's honest to say that doing *Blade Runner* wasn't tremendously smooth in terms of a working relationship with Harrison. There's no point in pussyfooting around that. Harrison's a very charming man, but during the filmmaking process we grew apart, mainly because of the logistics of the film I was trying to make. In concentrating on getting *Blade Runner*'s environment exactly the way I wanted it, I probably short-changed him.

Not giving him enough attention?

Yes. That was a failure on my part. But when a film is being made, nobody ever thinks about the director. In fact, there were times when I could tell Harrison was displeased with me, and I'd think, What about me?! I've got 19,000 other things to think about and deal with! I actually said something like that to him once. I said, "Listen, this is my movie, and I have my performance as well as you have yours. And, you know, both will be brought together. That's all I can promise." Because to put [something like *Blade Runner*] on screen requires enormous attention to detail. The rift between Harrison and myself was very draining. At the same time, our collaboration was an exciting one, because Harrison is so smart. He's a very intelligent, incisive and articulate man.

What about the infamous faux happy ending which wrapped up the original theatrical cut?

We screened a work-in-progress version for sneak preview audiences in Denver and Dallas. The response cards were worrying because some audience members had a problem understanding the film. A few also didn't like my original ending,

THE CHESS GAME

Did you know that the chess game between Tyrell and Sebastian replicates the conclusion of a game between Adolf Anderssen and Lionel Kieseritzky in London in 1851? It is known, because of its brilliance, as "The Immortal Game" (although some chess pedants claim the match was not perfect). Immortality is just what Roy Batty has got on his mind. Interestingly, when Tyrell makes a fatal error in the game, he loses his life.





Scott debates replicant with Brion James and bespectacled Harrison Ford.

which climaxed with the elevator doors closing. Now, I took some serious body blows on *Blade Runner*. In fact, towards the end, I was on the ropes and spittin' in the bucket. I was totally spent. So I suppose that had something to do with the original narration, which I never liked, and the new ending we shot, which showed Sean and Harrison driving away into the countryside. Basically, I was just too tired to sort things out.

Why do you think it was a box-office flop?

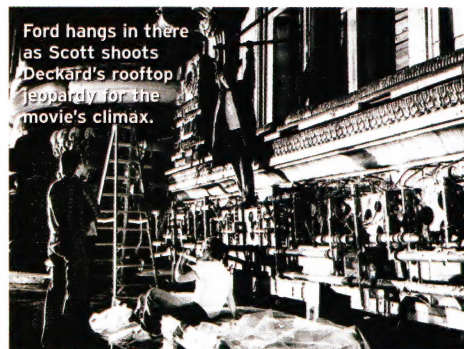
I think people were confused, because they expected another experience from the one they got. *Star Wars* had already happened twice by then, and Harrison was an established star because of *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*.

A mainstream star...

As you say. An action hero. And I had done a film with visual density substituting action, and essentially an unsympathetic character. *Blade Runner* taught me that the American public tends to favour a high-fibre diet. Which infers that the American system is one containing a certain degree of optimism. I, on the other hand, tend to be a bit darker. Not because I'm a manic-depressive, but because I find darkness interesting. This has something to do with my heritage. I am a Celt, and the Celts are fascinated by melancholia.

Did you take the film's failure personally?

It's safe to say I was quite disappointed. I remember going to the first preview. Harrison had to be snuck into the back of the theatre with his wife Melissa Mathison, a good writer. After the preview was over, we were sitting in this little office in the cinema. I was depressed. There had been a kind of a silence emanating off the people who were watching our



Ford hangs in there as Scott shoots Deckard's rooftop. Jeopardy for the movie's climax.

movie. Harrison was a little confused and worried as well. But then Melissa came over - and I'll never forget this - and she said, "I just wanted to tell you how much I loved your movie." She said it very quietly, and she really meant it.

What is the significance of the unicorn?

So much has been made by the critics of the unicorn, yet they've actually missed the wider issue. It is not the unicorn itself which is important. It's the landscape around it - the green landscape - they should be noticing. My original thought had been to never show a green landscape during *Blade Runner*. We would only see an urban world. I subsequently figured, since this moment offered the pictorial opportunity of a dream, why not show a unicorn? In a forest? An image so out of place with the rest of the picture that if it ran for only three seconds, the audience would clearly understand it was some sort of reverie.

So Deckard is a replicant?

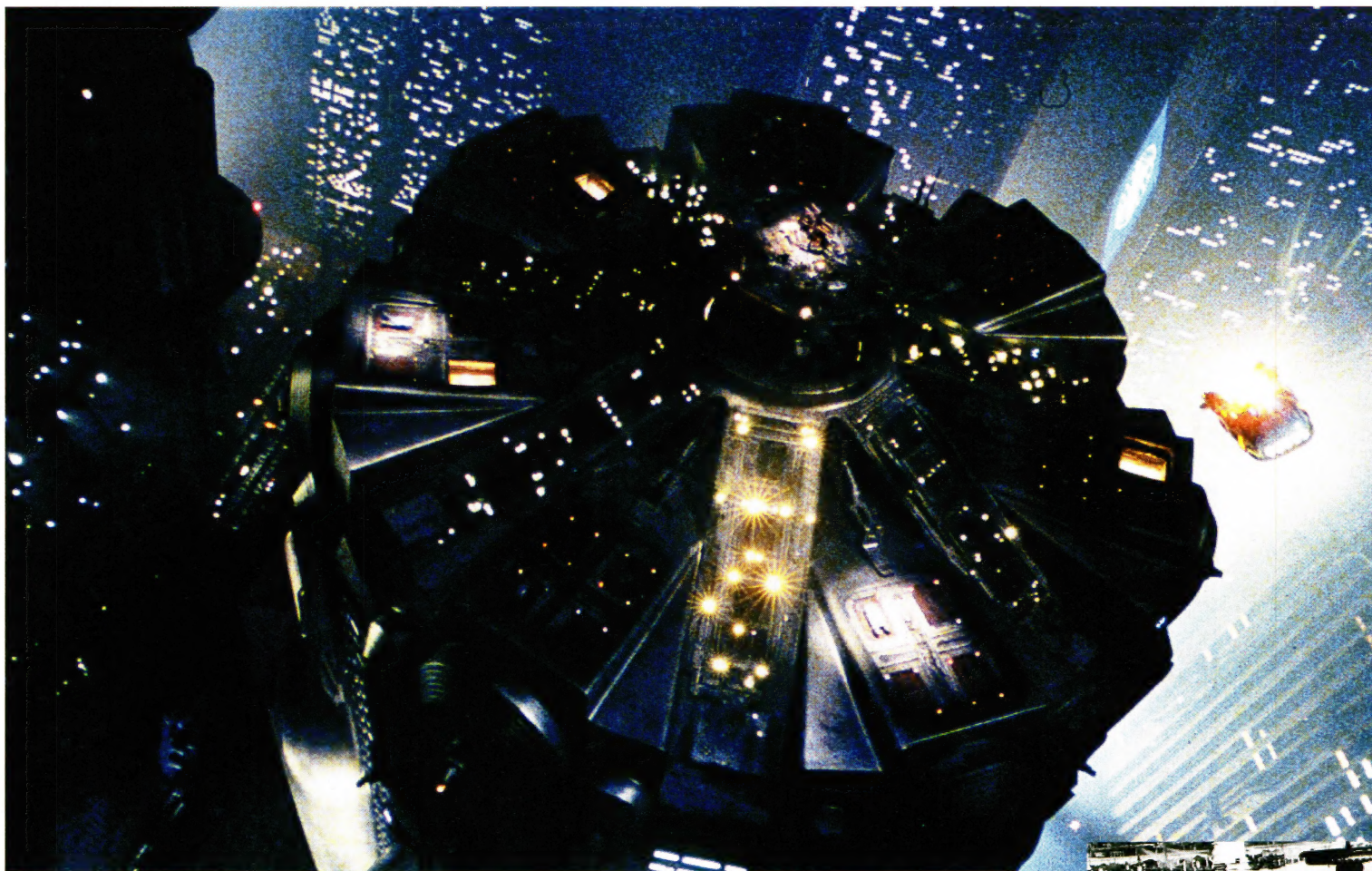
Well, in preparing the storyline, it always seemed logical to me that in a film of paranoia, Deckard

"I TOOK SOME SERIOUS BODY BLOWS ON BLADE RUNNER. TOWARDS THE END, I WAS ON THE ROPES AND SPITTING IN THE BUCKET."

should find out he was a replicant. It seemed proper that he might begin to wonder whether at some point the police department hadn't done precisely the same thing to him. So I always felt the amusing irony about Harrison's character would be that he was, in fact, a synthetic human. I felt it should remain hidden, except from those who paid attention and got it.

Have you watched *Blade Runner* lately?

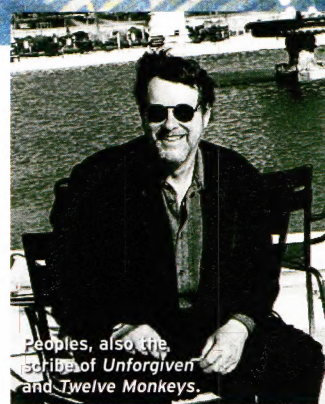
You know, it ran on the BBC in mid-1995, when I was home for a short time. And I thought, I'm going to sit down and watch this thing, to see if I can last 20 minutes. It was my so-called *Director's Cut*. And you know what? I was absolutely stunned by how clear it was in terms of story. The removal of the voiceover also makes a tremendous difference. It works on a level which I haven't seen much - or ever - in a mainstream film. It works like a book. Like a very dark novel. Which I like. But, at bottom, I think *Blade Runner* is a good lesson for all serious filmmakers to stand by your guns. Don't listen to acclaim or criticism. Simply carry on, and make your movie.



EMPATHY TEST

Screenwriter David Peoples on
the meaning of *Blade Runner*

WORDS IAN NATHAN



Peoples, also the
scribe of *Unforgiven*
and *Twelve Monkeys*.

NATURALLY, EVERYONE GOES GAGA

over those visuals, but have you ever stopped to consider just how good *Blade Runner's* script is? Sonorous, perplexing, wonderfully poetic and deceptively witty, it is here that the greater truths of *Blade Runner's* meaning reside. It is here that the film utterly contradicts its reputation as merely an exercise in eloquent style – something doubly surprising given the various rewrites that went on, not only before, but during and after in the case of the voiceover.

"I came in after many, many drafts already," sighs David Peoples, who, alongside Hampton Fancher, is credited with adapting Philip K. Dick's swirling, distorted novella *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?*. "To this day I've never read the book," he smiles.

Peoples was invited onboard by Ridley Scott, perturbed that the characters "never went outside the door" in his ongoing draft. Fancher too was becoming frustrated trying to meet his director's

demands, and Scott was tiring of the debate when his brother Tony mentioned this guy he was working with. They met in LA, and Scott handed over the working script. "The thing was terrific," recalls Peoples. "I said, 'Jeez, I can't make this any better.'"

Scott, he found, was a stubborn man – there were certain ideas he wanted to implement, and off Peoples was sent to his typewriter, forbidden to have any contact with Fancher (who was carrying on with his own rewrites). Twenty-five years on, Peoples struggles to remember which idea came from whom. He and Fancher have since become fast friends, a case of mutual admiration. In truth, the final script was a fusion of them both. Although the surfeit of ideas was threatening to become a car crash. Scott was reputed to have dallied with six possible openings, only one of which was entirely Peoples' own: "I wrote a scene of Batty off-world coming up out of a pile of bodies." The ongoing budget crisis retired

that idea. "It was all a big soup."

Peoples is a modest man, deferring glory to others when he should take his own fair share (that he also scripted *Unforgiven* and *Twelve Monkeys* is testament to his talent). Most importantly, it was he who came up with the pivotal term "replicants". "I just felt that 'androids' was an overused word and kind of comic-booky in the negative sense. I was talking with my oldest daughter, who was at UCLA studying chemistry and biology. She said these creatures had been 'replicated'. One of us said 'replicant' – it was a good word."

The idea of "replication", creating a slave race of artificial humans, rests at the fundament of both Dick's prickly fiction and Scott's derivation of it. At its heart, *Blade Runner* asks a simple question – what are we? "What exactly makes us human beings or not human beings?" adds Peoples. "Are we people because we have memories? That is the underlying question of the film. And it's not answered and not answerable."



The writer contributed many of the philosophical strands – as well as the term “replicant”.

“WHAT MAKES US HUMAN BEINGS? THAT’S THE UNDERLYING QUESTION OF THE FILM.” DAVID PEOPLES

Look closely and you’ll see how the film’s archetypes play in reverse – Deckard is recalcitrant, rigid, inexpressive; Batty, his foe, is exuberant, passionate, poetic, a dreamer. Which one is most human? What the Nexus-6 series of replicants represents, with its aptitude for emotional learning, is a rarefied form of humanity. Does Batty’s final action, to save rather than take life, offer up an optimistic view amid the hellscape of our spoiled future?

The film teems with ideas. It is about ecological decay, about race, about sexual politics (notice that all the female characters are replicants?), and about the corporatisation of America. It is also a grand parable of mankind’s ever-foiled mission to contend with its maker, to meet God and enquire politely why it is we have to die. What could be more human than Batty’s desperate need for more life? What more ambiguous than Deckard’s affinity with death?

“It just resonates with people,” says Peoples, “giving the film its eternal legs. Is he human? Isn’t he human? What is human? It’s in a large degree down to Hampton and Ridley both; their brilliance is to put something in there without giving it talky explanations. You can’t escape it, but you don’t talk about it.”

The point, especially with the various whims of Deckard’s status as replicant (something that spins contrarily between the cuts of the film – Peoples honestly admits he never intended to say he was in his version of the script), is to ask the question, not answer it. “Too bad she won’t live,” sneers the frankly immovable (and robotic) Gaff of Rachael’s limited shelf life. “Then again, who does?” None of us.

Beyond existential matters, the film is cloaked in movie lore – a science-fiction film as withdrawn and moody as a *film noir*. It is, Ford aside, antithetic to

Star Wars’ sheer expanse. We never get off-world, trapped in those gaga visuals scorched black by the cruel air, a dazzling future retrofitted to the gloom of *The Big Sleep* or *Out Of The Past*.

“That was in Hampton’s original draft,” Peoples says of the film’s *noirish* properties, which segues neatly into another of *Blade Runner*’s contentious points: the voiceover. “It originally had a narration that was very Chandler. I also did one in the same tone.”

The narration that adorns the original cut of the film is viewed as a disaster – Ford, for one, hated it, begrudgingly having to record it at the 11th hour. It was certainly not what either writer had had in mind. “Hampton and I both had turns trying to make a narration that was music and tonal without being explanatory,” says Peoples. “But we took it off the shooting script so the movie would stand on its own. When the movie suffered some narrative distress during production it was felt it needed narration to clarify the story. Hence other people were brought in and the narration was very clumsy.”

Years after the film’s initial failure, Peoples and Fancher got drunk in a bar. Fancher was far enough gone to broach the subject: “Why did you ever write that shit?” he slurred to his friend. They ended up laughing – Peoples had thought Fancher had written it. It was, in fact, penned by TV hack Roland Kibbee.








“People talk about the different versions, with or without the narration,” concludes Peoples. “I don’t think any version is satisfactory. What you want is the original narration, with its own little subtext, but we probably won’t get that until version 450.”

That it can never achieve its ultimate goal could be *Blade Runner*’s genius. It is a film forever seeking answers.







SO IS HE OR ISN'T HE?

The Deckard-as-replicant debate will just run and run

FOR

-  The “unicorn dream” tells us he has implanted memories.
-  His eyes glow orange when he tells Rachael he wouldn’t come after her.
-  Roy knows Deckard’s name.
-  Deckard has a thing for photos like the other replicants.
-  Bryant tells him, “If you’re not a cop, you’re little people.”
-  Gaff could be the real *Blade Runner*, always seeming just one step behind.
-  Ridley reckons he is.

AGAINST

-  The unaccounted-for “sixth replicant” Bryant mentions is merely a script mistake.
-  The Original Cut gives Deckard a backstory, including an ex-wife.
-  The contrast between Deckard’s soulless humanity and Roy’s poetic inhumanity would no longer work.
-  The unicorn may be Rachael’s memory (Deckard has seen her files). And Gaff leaves the origami for her...
-  Why would a “replicant cop” be so bitter about his job?
-  Harrison reckons he isn’t.





SYNTH JOB

Vangelis on creating that dystopian mood

WORDS IAN FREER

HAMPDEN GURNEY STREET,

Marble Arch, London, 1981. As overweight shoppers struggled to board double-deckers overlaid with shopping bags and Yank tourists searched frantically for "Ly-chester Square", Vangelis (real name: Evangelos O. Papathanassiou) sat high above in his Nemo Studios creating one of The Greatest Movie Scores Of All Time. The setting was bizarre: state-of-the-art musical equipment rubbed shoulders with primitive percussion instruments, all offset against the décor of a Joan Collins sex romp – a fountain, a hammock, a double bed, a rocking horse, mirrored statues and a tiger skin on the floor. But what came from this unlikely location (a disused school) was an evocative collection of dreamy, dystopian ditties and retro rhythms that sounded like nothing before or, frankly, since.

"What interested me the most for this movie was the atmosphere and the general feeling, rather than the distinct themes," says Vangelis. "The visual atmosphere of the film is unique and it is that I tried to enhance as much as I could."

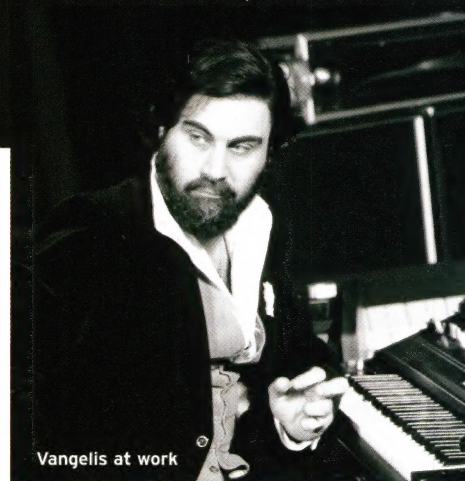
"Atmospheric" is often used in tandem with *Blade Runner's* score, but it doesn't do justice to the music's richness and diversity. Aeons away

from any other sci-fi score, Vangelis's work, full of unabashed emotion, down and dirty grunge, genuine wonder and a heartbreaking melancholia, imbues Scott's imagery with depths and dimensions Alan Silvestri can only dream of.

A former member of Aphrodite's Child (who, in a spooky *Blade Runner* coincidence, had a hit called *Rain And Tears*), part of the Jon-and-Vangelis double-act with Yes frontman Jon Anderson and, in 1981, a film and TV composer with a growing rep, Vangelis came to *Blade Runner* via a number of connections – Ridley Scott had used music from his *China* album for a Chanel No. 5 ad, while *Blade Runner's* editor, Terry Rawlings, had cut the Vangelis-scored *Chariots Of Fire* – an Oscar-winner for music.

"I usually prefer not to read the scripts of the movies for which I compose music because I prefer to keep my first impression of the image," recalls Vangelis about watching the rough cut with Scott and Rawlings. "I consider this to be more effective and interesting. So on this occasion, I started writing the music as soon as I saw the first images."

Just as *Blade Runner's* universe is a collage of past and future, American and Asian, *noir* and



Vangelis at work

sci-fi, so the score is driven by a thieving magpie aesthetic that borrows liberally from a dizzying array of musical genres. "I believe that Ridley has a very good sense of music and shows a special interest towards music which is in a way out of the ordinary. He's open to elements of ethnic, classical, electronic, rock etc. This approach I found absolutely agreeable because it carries almost no constraints in composing as long as the music serves each particular scene in the best possible way."

With Vangelis's favoured synth – the Yamaha CS-80, fact fans – providing the dominant voice, *Blade Runner's* eclecticism still dazzles today. From the haunting love theme played as Deckard



The composer looked to the film's imagery, not script, for inspiration.



"WHAT INTERESTED ME ON THIS MOVIE WAS THE ATMOSPHERE AND GENERAL FEELING." VANGELIS

and Rachael kiss ("When I listen to that piece I feel something special, but I don't know why") to the Arabic-influenced *Tales Of The Future* sung by Demis Roussos ("The words are more or less Arabic and in some other scenes you can hear the characters speak in incomprehensible 'cocktail' language which was invented for the movie"); from the '40s throwback *One More Kiss, Dear* played just after Zhora's death to the driving *End Titles* theme ("I was just feeling we shouldn't end melancholically – we should end in a more dynamic way"), *Blade Runner* astonishingly still manages to be a coherent, unified piece.

"I always compose instinctively; everything came out naturally," says Vangelis of the score's trademark mix of electronica and acoustica, often seen as a musical representation of the film's dynamic between human and android. "I have never felt there is a distinction between electronic or acoustic instruments. For me, any object producing sound is important and will always have its place."

With Vangelis playing the majority of instruments (although Dick Morrissey played the *Love Theme*'s potentially corny but strangely affecting sax solo), *Blade Runner*'s score is also marked by a complete desire to experiment. To create the resonating booms that herald Los Angeles 2019 at the start, Vangelis coupled a big bass-drum sound with a MasterRoom spring reverb unit (capable of creating a seven-second delay). To get the boozy, woozy piano sound of *Memories Of Green*, Vangelis filtered his Steinway grand piano through a (deep breath) Electro-Harmonix Electric Mistress guitar flanger pedal – the result, heard as Deckard tells Rachael she's a replicant, so impressed Scott he revamped

it for *Someone To Watch Over Me*. The track is further enhanced by electronic beeps and blops courtesy of an early handheld video game, the brilliantly titled Bambino UFO Master Blaster Station. The only problem came if the game ended during the recording, producing a terrible "Game Over" noise...

Echoing the troubled nature of the shoot, the release of Vangelis's OST was a tortuous affair. While the end credits of the 1982 cut promised an original score on the Polydor label, Vangelis's version didn't surface for another 12 years. In the meantime, a couple of bootleg versions emerged, and a terrible orchestral rendition of Vangelis's score performed by The New American Orchestra came out to support the film's release ("I'd rather skip that question," is his response when probed about it), adding fuel to the rumours that Vangelis had suppressed his own score due to his dissatisfaction with Scott's treatment of his music. "No, that's not true," he says emphatically. "Any changes that might have been made were sometimes made in a state of exhaustion but always in good spirits. I enjoyed the movie and the collaboration with Ridley."

Post-*Blade Runner*, Vangelis mined a similar synth vein with *The Bounty, 1492: Conquest Of Paradise* (also with Scott) and *Alexander*, but never came close to reaching its moody magnificence. Twenty-five years have passed, but like so many things in *Blade Runner* – is Deckard a replicant? Why was the film initially a flop? Does the 2019 LAPD run short courses in origami? – the source of the score's power to captivate still remains a mystery.

"Maybe it was timing," Vangelis shrugs, "or maybe it was just chemistry."

THE NEXT GEN

When is a sequel not a sequel?

THE SEQUEL: *Blade Runner II* (1990s)

A sequel was bandied about for years, and came close to happening when Ridley Scott got back on board in the '90s. Tentatively titled *Metropolis*, Scott saw it as a chance to look at "the origins of Harrison Ford's character, addressing the idea of immortality" and promised a "very intelligent" sequel. By 1995, after the brothers Scott bought Shepperton Studios, Scott confirmed that a *Blade Runner* sequel would shoot there, but didn't give a start date. And then it all went quiet...



THE SIDEQUEL: *Soldier* (1998)

David Peoples, screenwriter of *Blade Runner*, wrote this big-budget sci-fi flop, starring Kurt Russell as a genetically engineered super-soldier. The wreckage of a spinner can be spotted in the background, and Russell has a tattoo of "Tannhauser Gate". Peoples considers *Soldier* a "side-quel" to *Blade Runner*, although it doesn't have official sign-off.

THE TV SPIN-OFF: *Total Recall 2070* (1999)

As close to a TV spin-off as we've seen. Despite the name, it shares at least as much DNA with *Blade Runner* as the Arnie extravaganza. It's set in a dark, crowded, cosmopolitan setting; features a hugely powerful corporation that makes androids; and boasts a cop whose partner is killed by self-aware androids.

THE BOOKS: *Blade Runner: The Edge Of Human; Replicant Night; Eye And Talon; Beyond Orion* (1995, 1996, 2000, 2001)

These four novel sequels by sci-fi writer and friend-of-Philip-K's, K.W. Jeter, carry on the story of the film (rather than book) using some of those famous narrative blips (Deckard as replicant etc). They start after the end of the film, with Tyrell's niece Sarah (the template for Rachael) sending Deckard on a hunt for the fabled sixth replicant. But things get seriously twisted with questions of time travel, and the (sort of) return of Roy Batty.





Rutger Hauer on why Roy Batty is the real hero of *Blade Runner*

WORDS DAN JOLIN

IN A SENSE, THE BIG QUESTION

of *Blade Runner* is not, "Is Deckard a replicant?" but rather, "Is Roy Batty a human?" It does seem that concern over Deckard's real identity has obscured the film's true heart – or rather, its true soul. Though not for Rutger Hauer, the actor cast as the leader of the Nexus-6 renegades. Even a quarter of a century after he sat soaking on a soundstage rooftop in a pair of cycling shorts, clutching a dove and reportedly reducing an exhausted crew to tears with his poignant talk of "C-beams", it's still crystal-clear to the 63-year-old Dutch actor that Batty is, in Hauer's own words, "a hero in disguise".

"I don't think a lot of people got that," he sighs. "There's a very romantic side to the whole character – I always look for the divine, and it's certainly there in Roy." Nowhere is Batty's human nature better borne out than on that rooftop, but before we come to that character-defining moment, arguably cinema's greatest death scene, it's worth considering

the evidence in the rest of the movie for Hauer's twin claims of shrouded heroism and naked divinity.

The entire structure of *Blade Runner* is one of parallel investigations: Batty is in a mirror-image position to Deckard, where he lurks just on the other side of the wall. (A wall the former literally smashes through come the tense Bradbury Building showdown – a gag that Hauer at the time resisted, complaining to Scott, "Roy's not Superman, for Christ's sake!", but which works wonderfully as a sign that Batty has finally passed into Deckard's "world".) On the one hand we have Deckard, investigating this deadly pack of "skin-jobs"; on the other we have Batty, pursuing his own mission to literally meet his maker, android-designer Tyrell. The purpose of Deckard's is death – the "retirement" of these replicants; the purpose of Batty's is life – an extension of his and his companions' cruelly in-built four-year lifespan. Both investigations involve a body count, although only one of Batty's kills occurs on screen – a subtle

skewing of our sympathy on Scott's part. Both, too, have a romance with a mannequin-like woman; just compare Batty's tender looks and playful body language with Daryl Hannah's Pris to Deckard's clumsily forced embrace and "Say, 'Kiss me'" scene with Sean Young's Rachael – a near-rape.

Continued comparisons only serve to flatter Batty and condemn Deckard: Batty has a sense of humour, albeit a rather creepy one; Deckard only frowns. Batty, like his fellow renegades, has childlike energy ("Of course! He's a four-year-old!" says Hauer); Deckard is tired, slumped. Deckard is – if you ignore the theatrical-release voiceover – virtually monosyllabic; Batty eloquent and poetic. "One of the ingredients for Roy was that he had a poetic sense," confirms Hauer. "Which is impossible for a machine, and that's why Ridley and I liked it."

This is where Roy's "divinity" is borne out: after killing Tyrell (his "father", his "God") and J.F. Sebastian, we see Roy descending in an elevator,



Left: Batty saves Deckard's life at the climax. Below: Hauer monkeys about with a prosthetic Tyrell.

BLADE RUNNER CURSE

The future LA is awash with logos from real companies, but many would regret their appearance...

1. Atari had 70 per cent of the videogame market in 1982, but suffered losses of over \$2 million in the first quarter of 1991.
2. US telephone giant Bell lost its monopoly in 1982.
3. US airline Pan-Am filed for bankruptcy protection in 1991.
4. Cookery giant Cuisine Art filed for bankruptcy protection in July 1989.
5. Soon after *Blade Runner*, Coca-Cola released their "new formula", resulting in losses of millions of dollars.



"THE ROBOT, BY DYING, SHOWS DECKARD WHAT A REAL MAN IS MADE OF." **RUTGER HAUER**

looking up at the stars, the heavens shooting away from him. Consider this alongside his recitation of William Blake's *America: A Prophecy* in Chew's Eye Works, where he intones, "Fiery the angels fell..." and you have Roy pegged as a fallen angel. Plus there's the religious symbolism of the dove and the nail through his hand at the climax...

Ah, the climax. Here, at last, the story's twin detectives, its two protagonists, meet; and it's here, after a howling, feral diversion, that Roy affirms his humanity – just, tragically, as he expires. Early on, Batty makes his assault on the moral high ground, goading Deckard for firing on an unarmed opponent and shouting, "I thought you were supposed to be good. Aren't you the good man?" By the time he's rescued Deckard from his roof-girder dangle, the high ground is won. Batty saved the life of the man who'd just killed the woman he loved, because he'd come to value life above all else, no matter whose.

So a kind of justice is achieved, and how poetic it is: "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe," Batty tells Deckard in his last moments, a wry smile playing on his lips, his head lolling tipsily forward.

"Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time... To die."

The authorship of these beautiful and oddly evocative last words is appealingly confused. David Peoples originally wrote them to follow the, "If only you'd seen what I've seen with your eyes" line at Chew's, but by the time he'd relocated it to the denouement, the speech was, as Hauer recalls, "20, 25 lines – it was an opera-like death scene, all pretty hi-tech and smart-talk, but also totally abstract." The popular misconception is that Hauer ad-libbed some of them, but not so: he simply asked to edit down Peoples' speech. "After all the other [replicant] deaths were so Gothic and so big, I felt we had to do quick, intense and simple," he explains. "I said, 'When the battery goes, Ridley, we gotta move! 'Cause there's only so much time!' And he agreed with me." Then, in a flash of inspiration, Hauer added the "All those moments..." sign-off.

The precise meaning of this monologue didn't concern Hauer: "It's like a glimpse of the alternative world. Who knows what C-beams are? Maybe he's making it up, you know? Maybe he's just doing a show. Part of me said: 'He's acting his death scene, here.'" Which may seem wilfully flippant, but it does chime with Roy's ultimate concern that, since

he can't achieve an extended life, he must somehow make his mark on existence. More to the point, says Hauer, "I thought, Wouldn't it be nice if you could just get a glimpse of Roy's understanding that he's seen this coming, that he knows his time is over? And that he can say in a small way to this so-called real-world hero, 'Boy, you've just been trying to escape and escape – you've never stepped up to the plate. How unwarrior-like.' And the robot in the final scene, by dying, sort of shows Deckard what a real man is made of."

Perhaps the most telling moment comes seconds before the film's end. Go back to that point where the dove-clutching replicant crouches above the flailing Deckard, wild eyes glimmering as the panicking *Blade Runner* considers his imminent fatal plummet. Listen carefully as Deckard's hand slips and, with a final burst of lightning-energy, Batty grabs his foe's wrist. It's easily missed, but you'll hear Batty exclaim: "Ah! Kinship!"

In this split-second they're finally united, but not, as some would have it, because Deckard is another replicant. It's because Batty is now the hero. More of a hero, at least, than Deckard – and now, in a way, more human than Deckard. Or rather, as the Tyrell Company's motto goes: "More human than human..."



The producer of the DVD fans have been waiting for talks

WORDS PAUL M. SAMMON

THE HIDDEN JOKE BEHIND THE

title of *Blade Runner: The Director's Cut* is that it really isn't one. But that sort of confusion seems appropriate when it's yoked to Ridley Scott's intellectually challenging mash-up of urban angst and futuristic film noir. Since its initial appearance, *Blade Runner* has spawned four different versions of itself. And now there's a fifth. This one comes with an apparently conclusive title – *Blade Runner: The Final Cut*.

The previous versions start with the "Workprint", which was previewed in Denver and Dallas during the spring of 1982. This first version, which seemed to confuse test audiences, has more than 70 differences to the *Blade Runner* most people have seen. The perceived audience befuddlement led to the hasty construction of a second version (the Theatrical Cut), a committee-constructed patchwork saddled with a poorly written voiceover and an incongruous happy ending. When *Blade Runner* was distributed outside the USA in 1982, its non-American prints were spliced with a few additional seconds of violence that hadn't appeared in the Theatrical Cut. This was the third version of the film – the International Cut.

Then, in 1991, the Workprint was screened once again, at two California theatres, to the general public. This time, though, the reaction was one of such overwhelming acclaim that Warner Bros offered Ridley Scott the chance to go back to *Blade Runner* and recut the film in the manner that he'd originally wanted.

Problem was, Scott was busy. The director

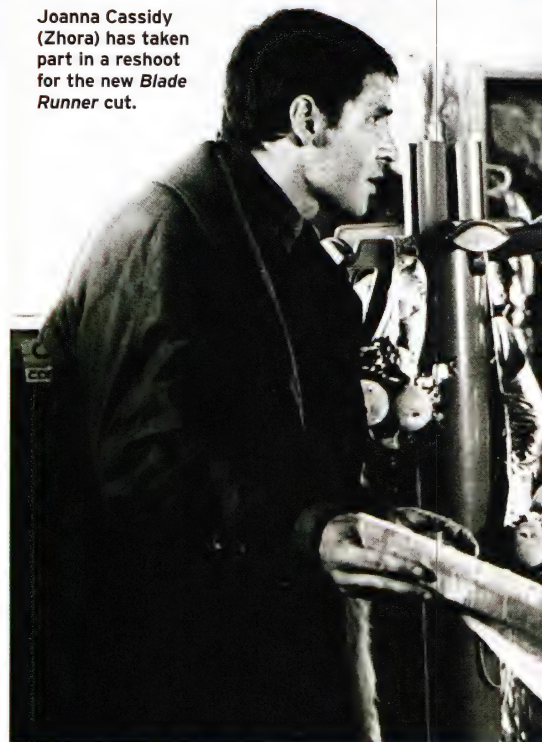
was then finishing up *Thelma & Louise* while simultaneously prepping *1492: Conquest Of Paradise*. So although he did accept Warner Bros' recutting-bid, his schedule prevented Scott from devoting full attention to the project. The compromised result was the 1992 Director's Cut. This fourth version did boast a number of startling changes – Ford's ersatz-hardboiled narration was taken out, as was the happy ending, while a suggestive daydream featuring a unicorn was reinserted – but Scott was uncomfortable with the final result, essentially feeling he'd never had the time to give *Blade Runner* a proper reboot. That time, it would appear, has finally come.

But why has it taken so long? The director's first opportunity to redo *Blade Runner* had been very much tied into Warner Bros' wishes to release his new cut on the film's 10th anniversary. So it should come as no surprise that once that had passed, Scott would have to wait nearly another decade before he was presented with a second opportunity to reshape the film.

That opportunity came in the summer of 2001, when Scott and his DVD producer, Charles de Lauzirika, agreed to assemble both a *Blade Runner* Special Edition DVD and a newly re-edited *Blade Runner* for a limited theatrical run. Both projects were positioned for a 2002 release, the year of the 20th anniversary, and both initially looked promising, especially after de Lauzirika uncovered a comprehensive cache of original *Blade Runner* negatives in a previously unvisited storage facility in Burbank, California.

"We were going to call Ridley's 2002 edit of

Joanna Cassidy (Zhora) has taken part in a reshoot for the new *Blade Runner* cut.



"THE FINAL CUT IS ONE LAST POLISH TO A FILM THAT NEVER HAD ONE."

CHARLES DE LAUZIRIKA



Left: DVD producer Charles de Lauzirika. Here: Zhora's death will now be dodgy-stunt-person-free.



Blade Runner the 'Definitive Cut,' de Lauzirika recalls. "And by the end of 2001, we were fully working on that. In fact, by early 2002, we'd completed about 20 per cent of the work required. That mostly consisted of research and cataloguing, and of putting together a rough cut of the Definitive Cut." Alas, both the *Blade Runner* box set and Definitive Cut project were shut down in March 2002 over copyright issues.

Then, on May 26, 2006, as the 25th anniversary approached, Warner Bros announced it had finally acquired worldwide rights to the film and would soon be unveiling its "Final Cut", which would involve re-employing de Lauzirika. After once again setting up shop on the Warner Bros lot, the producer and his team began finishing the cataloguing of all the *Blade Runner* footage they'd found in that Burbank warehouse five years earlier. But Scott himself would have to oversee from afar.

"One thing to keep in mind is that Ridley has made no fewer than seven films since we started discussing a new cut of *Blade Runner* back in 2000," de Lauzirika explains. "He's now prepping an eighth. So he's incredibly busy. We only bother him when we have to. I do keep Ridley in the loop on important matters, and when I have something to show him, he does take the time to participate. And when we approach the last stages, Ridley will become even more involved, since he will be approving everything."

Interestingly, Scott had already been mulling over exactly what refinements he'd bring to a *Blade Runner* "Final Cut" as early as 1997. In fact, he'd also reassessed his basic approach to the film. "If I did *Blade Runner* again today," he said then, "I'd probably come at it from a different angle. One thing I'd change is the amount of information I placed in the frame; ultimately, I think that that may have been a bit much for 1982 audiences. It may even have pulled them away from *Blade Runner's* story."

While Scott's statement would seem to invalidate one of *Blade Runner's* most fundamental attractions – its uniquely arresting devotion to overwhelming detail – the director was obviously sincere. "Looking back, I feel *Blade Runner* was too dark and the visual information was too dense," he reiterated just a few years ago. "One of the problems was that the world we created was so different that it overpowered what was a fairly straightforward story." Given that the film's morally murky, hyperdetailed environments are among its most distinctive (and beloved) characteristics, perhaps it's just as well that *Blade Runner* wasn't made after 1982...

In any event, Scott soon made it clear his ideas for the 2007 Final Cut were, generally speaking, exceptionally practical ones. To make sure every Final Cut tweak was done to Scott's satisfaction, de Lauzirika drew up a comprehensive list of all the visual and audio adjustments he felt the director might like to apply to the new version. Scott then vetted this list, adding his own thoughts along the way.

The result is a version which will contain a large number of differences that set it firmly apart from the Director's Cut. Although said

STANLEY'S ROAD

How did the original cut end up with outtakes from *The Shining*?



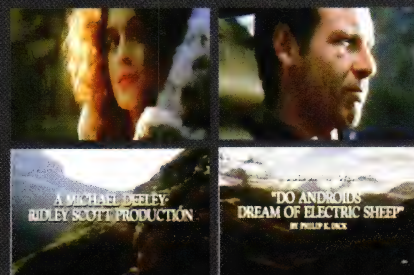
When *Blade Runner* was first tested, the news wasn't good. In truth, it was a disaster. People didn't get the movie, which still finished with the elevator doors closing ("What the fuck kind of ending was that?" screamed a report card). As squabbles commenced, decisions were made to add an "explanatory" narration and conclude the film on a lighter note. The answer, peculiarly, was to call Stanley Kubrick, who had recently completed his horror opus *The Shining*.

"Stanley was a very close friend of mine," claimed co-executive producer Bud Yorkin. "I called him up and said we needed to do a new ending. I need cumulus clouds. I'm sure you got tons of footage from *The Shining*."

However, Ridley Scott claims he called Kubrick, telling him of the dreadful test screening, and the need for an optimistic note at the end. Kubrick sympathised and agreed. "Within that afternoon," said Scott, "I had 17 hours of helicopter footage." Kubrick was not one to go without options.

That they were both Warner Bros films must have helped. The tagged-on ending doesn't fit. We are supposedly seeing Deckard and Rachael flee the oppressive city into some bucolic countryside. A strange notion given that the planet is supposedly so ravaged most people have moved off-world.

"I didn't care for it very much," said Harrison Ford.



Elements of the film will be improved, such as Batty's death sequence and Gaff's spinner showing the cables (right).



"ALL OF THE TWEAKS WE'RE DOING FOR RIDLEY HAVE TO BE ABSOLUTELY SEAMLESS."

differences have not yet been finalised, it's safe to say it will involve the digital removal of some of the film's technical blips – such as the obvious appearance of support cables on Gaff's spinner – return some additional scenes from the Workprint version, repair a few sequences in which there's some audio mismatching, and address a few issues with confusing dialogue.

Other minute Final Cut corrections are also being planned, but they're too numerous to list here. However, one unusual aspect of the new *Blade Runner* does merit scrutiny: the Final Cut's "greenscreen shoot", which took place during a single day of filming last April, and involved Joanna Cassidy (Zhora).

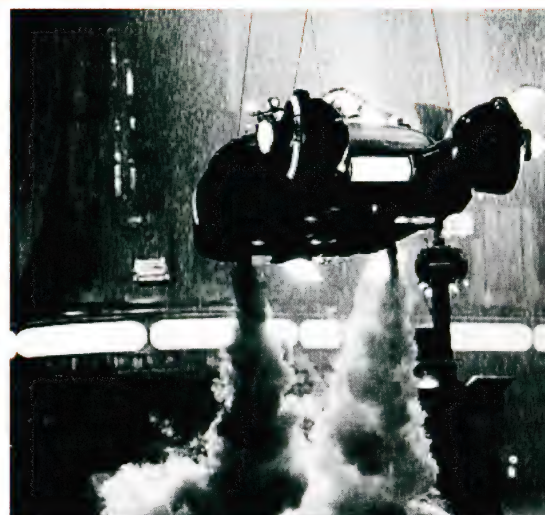
"Basically, the greenscreen shoot was a special-effects session that we did to correct some minor visual and audio problems," de Lauzirika explains. "For example, fans know there's been a nagging issue about the scene where Zhora crashes through panes of glass after Deckard shoots her in the back. Because, up until now, it's been pretty obvious that it wasn't Joanna Cassidy

smashing through; instead, you could clearly see the face of the stunt-person (Lee Pulford) standing in for Joanna. We wanted to correct things like that."

The greenscreen shoot, produced by de Lauzirika and directed by Richard R. Hoover of Sony Pictures Imageworks, also reworked the scene in which Deckard examines the photograph that's supposed to show Joanna Cassidy's neck and head, but reveals that a stand-in was used for the actress here instead.

The technical solution to each of these problems primarily involved a digital "cut-and-paste" method, whereby the lips, chins and/or full faces of Cassidy and other actors were replaced with newly shot footage of the same body parts.

"One amazing thing about the greenscreen shoot was how closely Joanna was able to mimic movements she'd done 25 years earlier," de Lauzirika recalls. "She gave a great performance that day; it perfectly matched what she'd done before. Joanna's also still in great shape, and looks exactly like she did while she was making



Blade Runner.

"All of Joanna's footage is looking good," de Lauzirika concludes. "But if it doesn't look good, it doesn't go in. That's the caveat for all the greenscreen stuff. The tweaks we're doing for Ridley here, and for the rest of the picture, have to be absolutely seamless. What's been most important about this new version is that it gave Ridley the chance to preserve the film's original elements, and to restore them. After that... well, this Final Cut is just one last polish to a film that never really had one."

The Final Cut will be making its DVD debut on December 5, both on its own two-disc set, and alongside the other versions on a deluxe, limited-edition five-disc set which will include all cuts of the film. And that's still not everything. De Lauzirika has conducted more than 70 interviews for the DVDs, and recorded several different audio commentaries. And even though the producer is keen to point out that the deluxe set is still a work in progress, he says he also hopes to include additional featurettes, still and art galleries, deleted scenes and more.

"All of this must be approved before inclusion, so I'm not sure what the final product will look like. But so far, my general proposal has been approved. And even if we only get 80 per cent of what we're after, I think anyone interested in *Blade Runner* will be really thrilled by the depth and breadth of the materials. I'm just trying to present the best *Blade Runner* possible. One that will satisfy Ridley, and the fans."

Still, de Lauzirika remains realistic about its overall importance in *Blade Runner* history. "Every time there's a new cut of any film," he points out, "some viewers who are familiar with the previous versions seem to have a tough time enjoying it. They sit there scrutinising every frame, looking for differences. And when there is a change, suddenly the viewer is taken out of the film, because now they have to sit there and ponder how successful – or not – the change was. I've had epic conversations and endless debates with friends about the changes made to the *Star Wars* films, so I'm no different in that respect..."

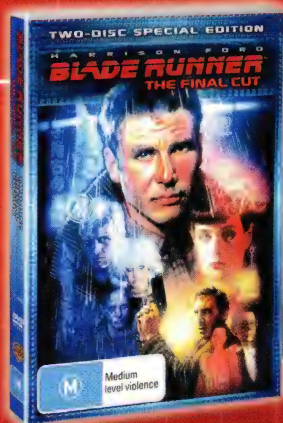
➤ *Blade Runner: The Final Cut* will be released on DVD on December 5.

HARRISON FORD

BLADE RUNNER™

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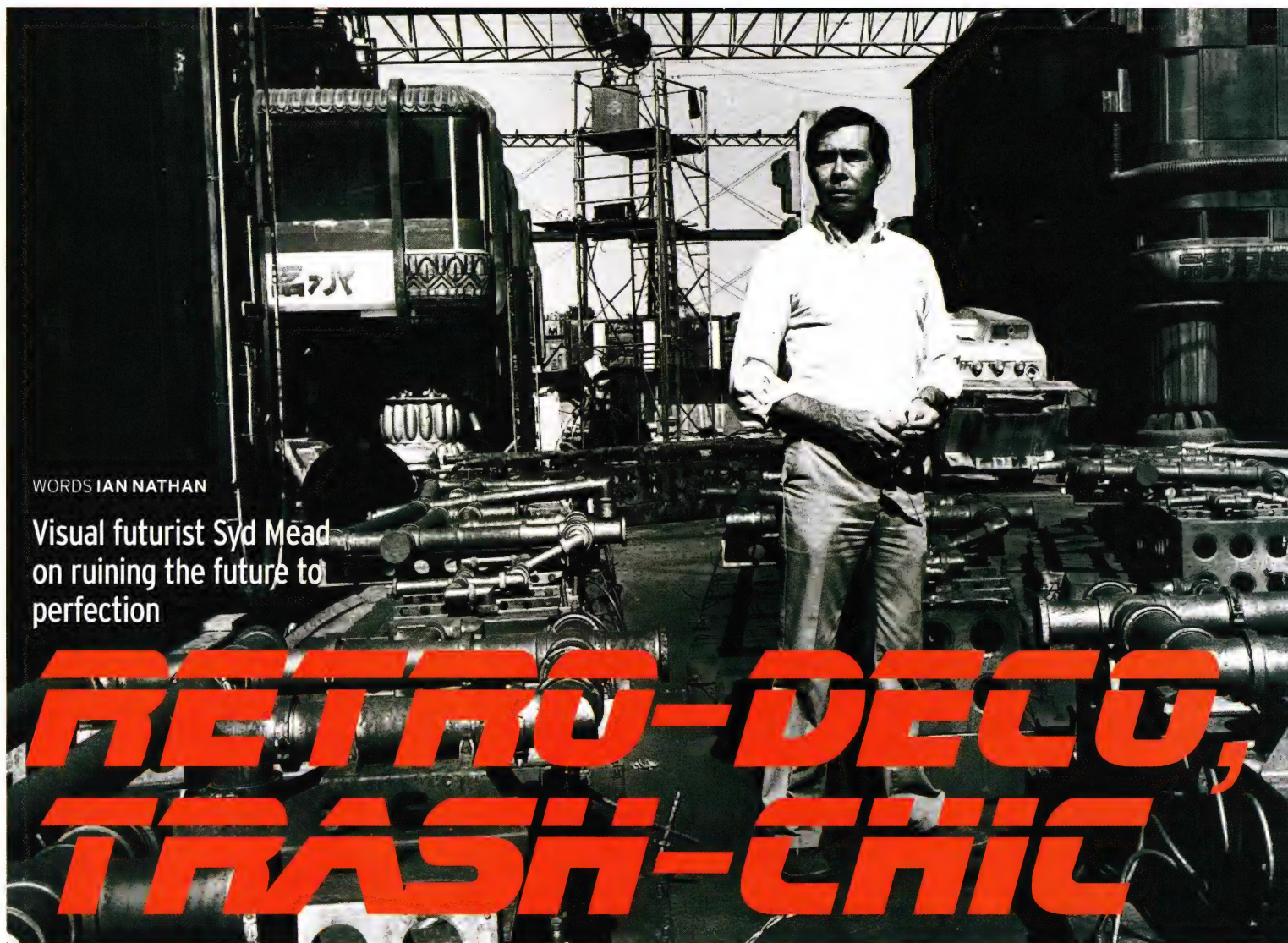
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WORDS IAN NATHAN

Visual futurist Syd Mead on ruining the future to perfection

RETRO-DECO, TRASH-CHIC

SYD MEAD, A SHORT, FAST-

talking man of 74, designs the future. He calls himself a visual futurist, and he's taken his vision to everyone from Ford to the first makers of Concorde (for whom he designed the cabin) and on to Hollywood, foreseeing possible (and probable) futures for science-fiction movies like *Tron*, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, and the one for which he will forever be renowned: *Blade Runner*. Except with *Blade Runner* the future is memorable because it is so decrepit. It remains one of the movie's many strokes of genius, that a discernibly futuristic cityscape could be so cloaked in the past.

"When I met Ridley, the first thing he said to me was, 'We're going to make a film about the future, but don't even think about *Logan's Run*,'" recalls Mead with a laugh. "I was really pleased with that. When I read the script I knew what he wanted right away – this dystopian, dysfunctional world."

Akin to how he "discovered" H.R. Giger for *Alien*, Scott had cottoned onto Mead's prowess as a designer from his first book of futurescapes, *Sentinel* (he was particularly drawn to a picture of a rainy, mega-structure city expressway), and asked him to create conceptual drawings for

his gloomy Los Angeles of 2019. While Philip K. Dick's novel posits a world eco-wrecked by nuclear devastation (and is located in San Francisco rather than its Californian sister city), Scott chose to remain ambiguous on the reason for the cracking of the sky. "There was no definite cause," confirms Mead. "It just had to have this ruined kind of look." Mead provided sketches, paintings and blueprints for the buildings and vehicles, as well as matte paintings that were positioned over the photographic prints – all of them approved by the demanding Scott.

"He was tough in that way," says Mead. "But it was a kind of perfectionism you can only respect. You wanted to make him happy. He would only sleep four hours a night; I have never seen a man work so hard."

As Mead came onto the project at a relatively early stage, he was party to the evolution of the city. They had thought of filming on the streets of New York, and Scott had scouted everywhere from London to Cleveland, but nothing could ever quite cohere to his vision. At one stage, the concept was for a city that consumed the entire Western seaboard from San Diego to Seattle, but such ambitions were always slave to the budget and they ended up mostly shooting on

the Warner backlot with Mead, production designer Lawrence Paull, art director David Snyder and special effects supervisor Douglas Trumbull charged with transforming the street-level sets into a metropolis both vertiginous and claustrophobic. And, above all, run-down, damp, shitty, yet, like J.F. Sebastian's voluminous digs, strangely desirable.

"We labelled our assembly style 'retro-deco' and added the additional label of 'trash-chic'. It followed Ridley's original intent to make a *noir*-style film," says Mead.

The visual texture of *noir*, that beaten-up world of the 1950s, is fully embraced by *Blade Runner*. Mead found old materials, classic deco designs, and retro locations for his director. The Bradbury Building in downtown LA was used for Sebastian's apartment because it came complete with an old-style iron-gated elevator, but still had to be transformed by Scott and his team into a sodden and shadowy *noir* hellhole. This process, a design philosophy across the production, was christened "retrofitting". The future would become so downbeat it retreated into the past.

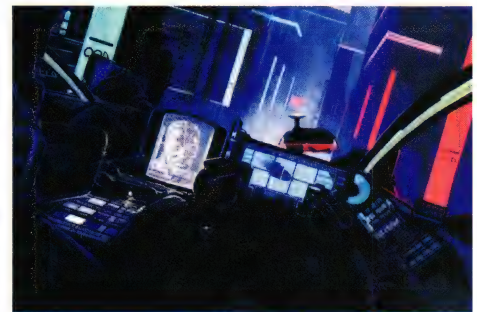
"There was this element of stratification, like geology," says Mead. Scott had been inspired by his experience shooting adverts in Hong Kong,



A blimp hovers above the cracked metropolis.



Top to bottom: Concept artwork by Syd Mead.



a city with towering skyscrapers but which was virtually medieval at its roots. "I took the New York street proportions as a 'today' model, and expanded everything about two-and-a-half times. It became about perspective," says the designer.

Their Los Angeles was a new city built on the old, layered like geological strata: the poor at the damp and rotten floor; the rich, aloof in their hi-tech pyramids, Aztec-shaped cathedrals in the sky. Picture, again, that opening shot as the camera slowly glides over the city, plumes of fire bursting into the sky – here was a Hell as stunning as Heaven.

"Ridley was from London, he didn't care about Los Angeles. I don't think he gave one fuck about what anyone else had done with it," said art director Snyder on the feasibility of this LA. "You design to the rules of the script – the world of the script."

Mead was also responsible for the design of the spinners, those nifty automobiles capable of lifting off like a Harrier up to the rooftops. In fact, he had looked into the dynamics of the famous jet fighter. The script's concept was that only members of the police or certified Blade Runners could use them; the rest of the population had to skitter about on bikes. Again, the design was predicated on working backwards – "Industrial design in reverse," says Mead. "I imagined Deckard's sedan was a de-commissioned flying limo." That's exactly what he did, turning a real limo into a spinner.

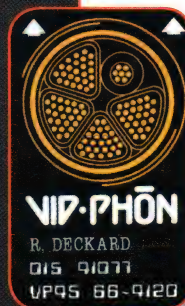
The look of the film has become its calling card, this extraordinary design echoing into modern cinema like nothing before it. Scott recalls watching the early days of MTV to see his own template repeated a million times across the

"OUR LOS ANGELES HAD TO HAVE THIS RUINED KIND OF LOOK, WITH NO DEFINITE CAUSE." SYD MEAD

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Added in the Director's Cut: "This announcement is brought to you by the Shimato Dominguez Corporation – helping America into the New World."



pop videos of the nascent '80s. This glutinous mix of industrial bleakness and technological palaces infuses the themes of *Blade Runner*. Above, up there in Tyrell's (God's) penthouse, you can see the sun set and stars glitter; below on

Deckard's beat there is the perpetual night of the damned, illuminated by the soulless beams of advertising hoardings. Nothing could truly date *Blade Runner's* communion with ruin – it already had its own Methuselah Syndrome. The irony is, its preoccupation with death made it timeless.

"It was just one of those chancy accidents," concludes Mead of this visual triumph. "Ridley deserves so much credit and admiration for creating the film under all kinds of duress: financial, time constraints, and his own flawless creative vision. *Blade Runner* will last forever."

A Scanner Darkly

THE UNREALITY SHOW

What the movies made of Philip K. Dick

WORDS ADAM SMITH

HE'S CRAZY.
TOOK DRUGS.
SAW GOD.
BIG FUCKING DEAL.

PHILIP K. DICK ON HIS LIFE

Philip Kindred Dick was born, along with a twin sister, Jane, six weeks premature, on December 16, 1928. He was lucky to survive. Home from the hospital, in the bitter Chicago winter, his mother struggled to care for the severely underweight babies. Though she didn't know it, the two children were in fact slowly starving to death, and it was only when Jane's leg was accidentally scalded that a doctor was called. Diagnosing acute malnutrition in both infants, he called an ambulance. Jane died on the way to hospital. Philip had been, the doctors later told her, within a day or so of death.

It was a traumatic beginning to a traumatic life, and there are those who see in this chaotic entrance the seeds of his later fiction – set in a universe where nothing is certain, where everything you think is permanent can be torn away. What is certain is that it led to an irreparably damaged relationship with his mother, whom he blamed for Jane's death.

But despite the tragic start, Dick was by all accounts a happy child, “fairly bubbling with life”, his father wrote in a memoir. It's impossible to know precisely what the young Philip's first introduction to science-fiction was, but it's certain that by high school he was frequenting the bookshops of bohemian Berkeley, California, where he and his mother had settled, hunting out copies of disreputable pulp magazines and paperback sci-fi novels. Yet it wasn't until he was in his early twenties that he decided to pursue a career as a writer. Scores of stories were written and rejected before his first sale, *Roog*, to *The Magazine Of Fantasy & Science Fiction* in 1951. He was paid the princely sum of \$75.

He spent the better part of the '50s churning out stories for his beloved pulps, and it's during this period that his tendency to crippling paranoia became evident. It had its perfect trigger in the unwanted attention of the FBI. Agents Scruggs and Smith first visited him sometime in 1954, asking Dick to identify political activists on the nearby Berkeley campus. Dick was anxious about the visit – he had always distrusted authority – but in a typically odd turn of events he and the agents became friends. One of the spooks even taught him how to drive.

Despite his success with the pulps, he made barely \$2000 a year; at times he and his wife found themselves living off dog food. Novels paid better, up to \$4000 a time, so in 1954 he began work on his

first sci-fi novel – *Solar Lottery*.

There is a perennial problem in philosophy – the “Brain In A Vat” problem. It goes like this: what if I am not a walking, talking human being, living in a world full of people, at all, but instead am simply a brain of some kind suspended in nutrient solution in a scientist's lab? There a giant computer could simply be feeding this brain electrical impulses that feel to it like experiences, memories, hopes and dreams and perceptions of a world full of other people. It's hard to just reject this concept out of hand. You can't actually *prove* that it isn't really the case because every time you come up with an argument against it, it could simply be the computer feeding you more electrical impulses. If all this feels vaguely familiar, you have heard it all before – in *The Matrix*, a film riddled with Phil dickian notions, though his response to the blue pill/red pill question would likely be, “Both pills, please, and would you happen to have any amphetamines on you?”

The notion certainly panicked Philip K. Dick. “We live in a society in which spurious realities are manufactured by the media, by governments, by big corporations,” he wrote in 1978. “I ask, ‘What is real?’ Because increasingly we are bombarded by pseudo-realities manufactured by very sophisticated people using very sophisticated electronic mechanisms.”

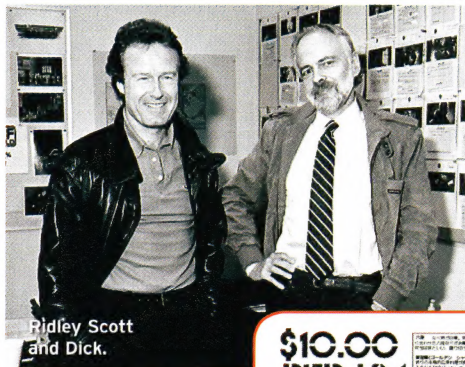
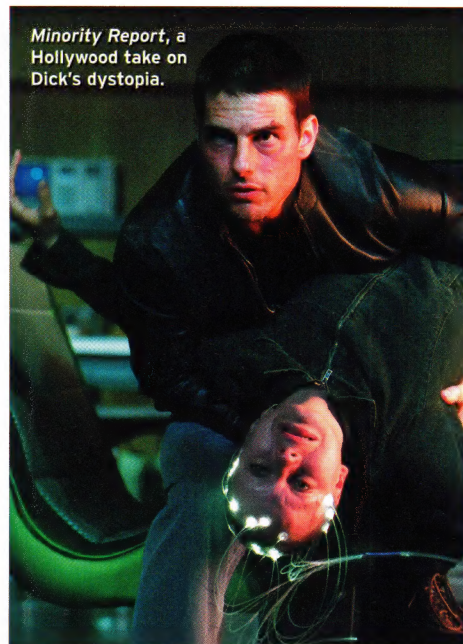
Thus in most of PKD's fiction, and in the best of the films that have been adapted from it, it is the



Total Recall, from Dick's
We Can Remember It For
You Wholesale



Minority Report, a
Hollywood take on
Dick's dystopia.



Ridley Scott
and Dick.

GLOWING

What's with those
golden reflections?

The orange-gold glow seen in various characters' (and one owl's) eyes is meant to suggest that they are replicants. Significantly, we also catch that colour in Deckard's eyes at one point. The effect was achieved by bouncing light off a half-mirrored glass mounted at a 45-degree angle on the camera.

nightmarish thought that the world is not real, that we're all victims of a cosmic hoax, that animates the characters. The replicants of *Blade Runner* lie at the nub of this question – living, thinking, artificial constructs.

Though Dick is reported to have been interested in film, there's precious little evidence that it was anything but a possible new revenue stream. Perhaps, as would prove to be the case, he suspected that his weird yet familiar worlds with their DayGlo paranoia would be difficult to represent on celluloid; that their ideas were just too out there for the medium of cinema. Indeed, the studios manifested their nervousness with Dick's universe by stripping the stories of their evocative, provocative titles. *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* became *Blade Runner* (a title purloined

from William Burroughs); *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale* became the more prosaic *Total Recall*.

During his lifetime, Dick was only tangentially involved in two film projects. In September of 1974 he was commissioned to write a screenplay based on his novel *Ubik* (FYI: a great intro to the Phildickian universe) for French director Jean-Pierre Gorin. Dick was paid \$1500 and produced the script in less than a month, but the project soon stalled due to lack of financing.

Meanwhile, *Blade Runner* writer Hampton Fancher's original screenplay was famously dismissed by a fuming PKD as "corny, cliché-ridden, a bumbling effort from start to finish". The later David Peoples polish was apparently a great improvement ("a first-class piece of work"), and though Dick saw and approved rushes from early in the shoot, we'll never know what he would have made of the film. He died, at the age of 53, before he could see it.

Total Recall possibly had the best chance to get near to the spirit of its original short story, and, amid the bloodshed and pyrotechnics, a few of Dick's concerns are dimly visible. It would take 16 years and 45 drafts to make the big screen. First to take a run at a screenplay was Dan O'Bannon, who soon found the novel impossible to adapt and turned his attention to *Starbeast*, later retitled *Alien*. David Cronenberg worked on it for a year without success: "We got to a point where [producer] Ron Shusett said, 'You know what you've done? You've done the Philip K. Dick version.' I said, 'Isn't that what we're supposed to be doing?' He said, 'No, we want to do *Raiders Of The Lost Ark Go To Mars!*'"

With the arrival of Arnold Schwarzenegger it became just that, though Paul Verhoeven was savvy enough to keep the paranoid edge of the story. "It was extremely innovative," Verhoeven has said. "To dare to say, 'Everything you see could be a dream, or it could be reality.'"

Sadly, most subsequent adaptations have been limp, low-budget affairs such as *Screamers* and

Impostor. John Woo botched *Paycheck*, making it an incoherent action-adventure. *Minority Report* was the highest-profile entry in the canon, but has precious little in common with PKD's story. The comfy suburban attitude of many of Spielberg's movies was precisely what Dick distrusted. As exec producer Gary Goldman observed, "It's very difficult to be true to Phil Dick and make a Hollywood movie. He questioned everything Hollywood wants to affirm."

Which is precisely why Richard Linklater's *A Scanner Darkly* was a triumph for Dick fans. This cynical tale of self-destructive substance abuse, psychological breakdown, identity confusion and intense surveillance is not only based on the book which most closely references Dick's own life—it's also the most faithful movie adaptation yet made of his work.

Scanner aside, though, the films that have been adapted from Dick's work have all lacked that unique Phildickian tone. However, his influence on Hollywood extends far beyond immediate adaptations. His ideas and obsessions have filtered into other writers' and directors' work. Screenwriter Charlie Kaufman has perhaps been contaminated at some point; *Being John Malkovich* and *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind* rejoice not only in titles that could easily have sprung from Dick's exuberantly unstable imagination, but their themes are paradigmatically Phildickian.

And then there's *The Truman Show*. Had he lived to see it, Dick would no doubt have suffered another of his bouts of paranoia. Andrew Niccol's screenplay bears an uncanny resemblance to PKD's 1958 novel *Time Out Of Joint*, in which the everymanish Ragle Gumm slowly realises that the idyllic smallville in which he lives is a construct designed to deceive him. Maybe the fact that these "fake" Dick movies are closer to his skewed universe views than most that actually bear his name would in the end have delighted a man for whom the twisted, unexpected and counter-intuitive were the grist to a life's work.

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Harrison Ford takes a breather while filming the climactic showdown between Deckard and Batty (Rutger Hauer).

WORDS PAUL M. SAMMON

Harrison Ford on the toughest role of his career

SURVIVING DECKARD

NONE OF *BLADE RUNNER*'S

cult adoration has ever cut much ice with Harrison Ford. Creating the film was a grueling, at times contentious, experience for many of its makers (many crew members dubbed it "Blood Runner") – and Ford caught his own share of the heat. One source of stress was the actor's prickly on-set relationship with co-star Sean Young. Another involved his working relationship with Ridley Scott, which was professional but remote.

Ford's biggest *Blade Runner* problems, however, were aesthetic ones. Shortly after being hired to star in the film, the actor argued against the hard-boiled, Sam Spade-like narration that had adorned the original script; he also actively resisted a pet idea by Ridley Scott, which suggested that Deckard might also be a replicant. But despite these objections, Ford was forced to record a narration for the original 1982 release. Then, when

the shorter, better *Director's Cut* was released in 1992, newly inserted footage inferred that, yep, Deckard was a replicant.

Those disappointments might explain why Ford has had very little to say about *Blade Runner*. Moreover, when the actor has chosen to speak about the film, his remarks, until very recently, were tellingly terse. "*Blade Runner* was not one of my favorite films. There was nothing for me to do but stand around and make some vain attempt to give some focus to Ridley's sets," he told the *Boston Globe* in 1991.

But the only permanence is change. Now, 25 years after its first appearance, Ford has seemingly made his peace with *Blade Runner*. So much so that he actually agreed to an interview purely about the film that so pissed him off. This is the first time the intelligent, drolly amusing 64-year-old Ford has ever officially discussed *Blade Runner* at length.

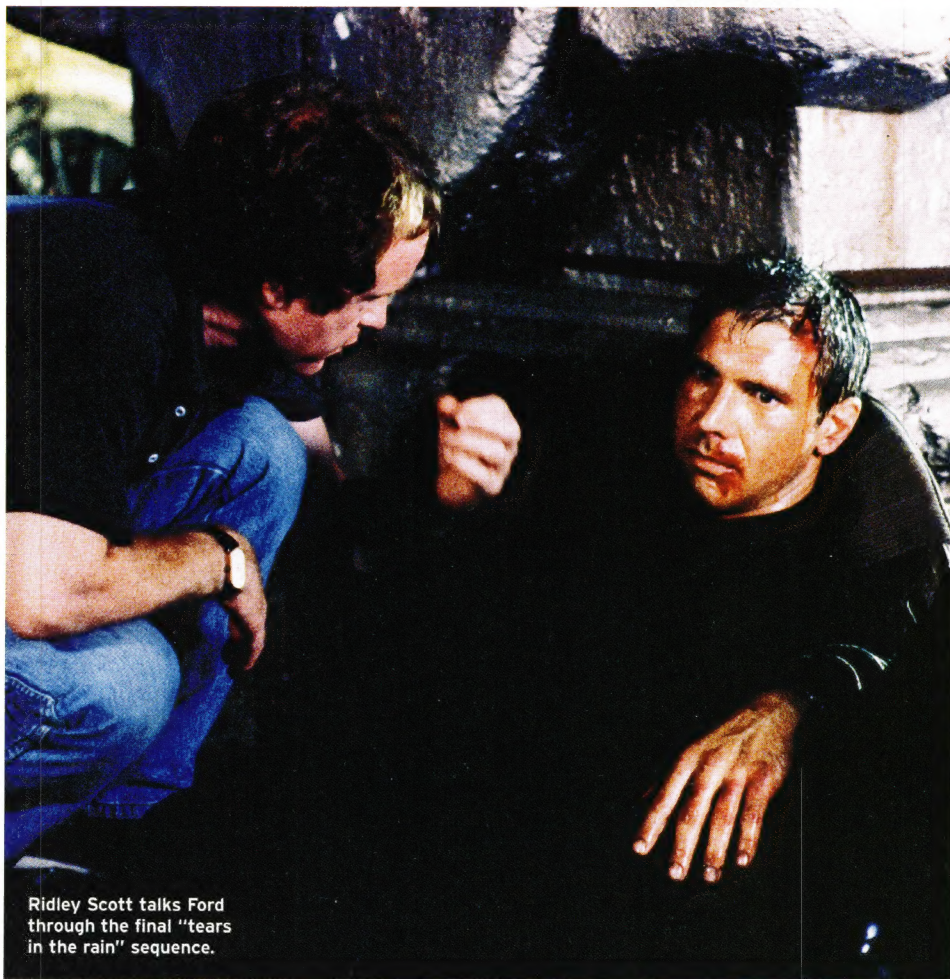
Was the script the reason you did this film?

What first prompts me to decide to do any film is a script that I can get emotionally involved in, and that I think will give me something interesting to do. I also think about whether that screenplay will translate into a good ride for the audience.

When I was offered *Blade Runner*, I was attracted to the film overall, and to that character in the film. I was attracted to Deckard's desperation. I was attracted to the dramatic circumstances he found himself in. And I was attracted to the notion of the impossible romance between Rachael [Sean Young] and Deckard. All of those things were interesting to me, in general.

But one aspect of the *Blade Runner* script that you didn't like was its narration.

Yes. The original script that I had did include a voiceover narration, and you're right, I didn't like it.



Ridley Scott talks Ford through the final "tears in the rain" sequence.

Because one of my other problems with the script was that I played a detective, and there were no scenes of my doing the detective work. So I asked Ridley and others involved whether they would consider taking out the information that was in the voiceover and putting that into scenes involving detection. In other words, instead of talking about things, this way you could allow the audience to forge an emotional connection to the situation itself, and let them pull the information out of that.

The old "show, don't tell" philosophy.

Yes. That was my instinct. I felt that the narration was standing in the way of that. So that was my singular request, at the very beginning - let's fix this. Eventually, the script was prepared without a voiceover narration. And that's the film we shot.

So your dislike of *Blade Runner's* narration began right up front, when you first signed up?

Absolutely. It was the key condition to my involvement. When we started shooting, it had been tacitly agreed that the version of the film that we had agreed upon was the version without voiceover narration.

So it must have come as a shock when you got to the end of production, and suddenly you're doing narrations again.

It was more than a shock, it was a fucking nightmare. I had thought that the film had worked without the narration. But now I was stuck re-creating that narration. And I was obliged to do

these voiceovers for people that did not represent the director's interests.

By "people" I assume you mean Tandem Productions, which took the film away from Ridley after it went over budget.

I am going to deny any knowledge about any of the machinations that went on off-screen.

Right [laughs knowingly].

No, I'm serious. I injured myself to that. I didn't want to know, because there was nothing I could do about it. This had already been a long, hard shoot and I was plumb worn down to the bone. So I was willing to try and satisfy "them". But I thought that they weren't giving me a lot of ammunition to work with. I kept showing up to record various versions of the voiceover with various people who had an interest in what they had prepared.

And?

And then it finally came to the final day of the final version of the voiceover. I showed up, and there was a man [Roland Kibbee] in a zip-up Hobby Suit, with that little twisty belt that goes around the middle, puffing on a pipe and beating on an old portable typewriter. He was the only person there when I arrived at the dubbing studio. I stepped into the room and he was sitting fairly close to the door, banging away. I said, "Hello, I'm Harrison Ford." The man turned to me and made sort of a sour face. Then he waved me off, and - [Ford mimes fingers hitting a typewriter keyboard] - he went right back

ANIMAL ASSOCIATIONS

All the main characters have animals associated with them. Do the connections hold any meaning?

- Leon:** Turtle
- Roy:** Wolf, dove
- Zhora:** Snake
- Rachael:** Spider
- Tyrell:** Owl
- Sebastian:** Mouse
- Pris:** Raccoon
- Deckard:** Sushi (raw fish), unicorn



"I THOUGHT IT WAS A GREAT MISTAKE TO SUGGEST DECKARD IS A REPLICANT; THERE'S NO-ONE TO ROOT FOR." HARRISON FORD

to banging away. And that was the man with whom I recorded the final narration [laughs].

By this point, I had already done the narration at least six times. But this time the man who had written the narration was there for it - he was the only one there - and I would not deign to debate it with him. It was pointless to try, because he was unwilling to bend and there was no tie-breaking vote. Now, I had debated every other version; I had tried to improve the language, clarify the ideas and give emotional weight to those voiceovers that I had done before. The last time, though, I had fucking had it. So I simply said, "Sir, let's not talk about it. I'll just read each one of these lines five, six times until you're satisfied, and we'll move on to the next." Which is what we did.

There was a rumour that you intentionally read that last batch badly because you were unhappy with them. It seems strange that you'd purposefully sabotage your work like that. Yeah.

Where do you think that rumour came from?

I don't know. And I don't care! [Laughs] It is correct to say that I was unhappy with the editorial choices that they had made regarding the different versions I had recorded, because there were variations between those versions, better takes of the voiceover I'd read. I have no idea who picked the final version, though, or how they went about that. But I did a professional job, as far as I was able.

That's what I'd assumed. All right, here's the other *Blade Runner* question you're always asked - is Deckard a replicant?

Here we go...

Yes, it's time for *that* question.

Well, I've said this many times, but I thought it was a mistake to suggest that Deckard was a replicant. A great mistake. Because it left the audience with no-one to root for. But the whole Deckard-replicant thing was handled, in a sense, like the narration. I thought we'd settled that replicant issue early on, before we began filming. But towards the end of production, when we shot the scene of Deckard finding the origami animal outside his apartment, I asked Ridley, "What the fuck are you doing, man? That means Deckard's a replicant, right? Come on! You said we wouldn't take it that way! I thought we were somewhere else with that." Yeah! Again, I thought that I had secured Ridley's agreement about Deckard not being a replicant before we started. But he must have still had some reservations about that. Or maybe Ridley wanted to have it both ways.

I am intrigued by the possibility Deckard might be a replicant, though. I enjoy its ambiguity.

Oh, I think ambiguity is endlessly productive. I have no argument with ambiguity. It's the finality that I have an argument with.

The *Director's Cut* pretty much does everything but slap a sign on Deckard's forehead reading "REPLICANT!" And on the *Blade Runner* set back in 1981 you said that you felt that the idea of an unsuspecting android getting back in touch with his feelings just didn't resonate on the same plane as a burnt-out human doing the same thing.

Exactly. The human touch. That's what I argued for.

You've previously said things like, "I tangled with Ridley." Was it a troubled relationship on set?

Was ours an untroubled relationship? No. So it was a complicated thing. But Ridley was always in command of that set.

Generally speaking, did you or did you not get along with Scott?

No, we always got along. Look, Ridley and I tangled about *Blade Runner's* narration and the Deckard's-a-replicant thing, but... Perhaps our relationship seemed more contentious than it was. I mean, I don't mind arguing with people. I think a free exchange of ideas is great.

How do you feel about Scott today?

What's striking to me today is that Ridley's subsequent career has been a real process. Ridley's continued to develop as a director, to find very challenging and interesting work to do. Now, I'm not a film buff, but if you examine it since *Blade Runner*, Ridley's career has also been remarkable for the amount of maturation that has taken place. To the point where he will now occasionally make a film that is totally character-based. I truly do admire Ridley.

So you and he are friendly now?

Oh yeah. Have been, for a while.

What, 25 years on, are your feelings about

Deckard regarding the (symbolic?) unicorn in the final shot of the Director's Cut.



"THE VOICEOVER NARRATION COMING BACK WAS MORE THAN A SHOCK. IT WAS A NIGHTMARE." HARRISON FORD

Blade Runner?

The graphic strength of the film remains undiminished. The pure weirdness of *Blade Runner* also remains. And you know, I think more than anything, it's an oddly human story. Obviously, the whole film is about what it is to have human consciousness.

Which was a prime thematic concern of Philip K. Dick...

I remember finding that in [*Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?*], yes. And the fascination with that question has not waned. So the initial conceptual

strength of the film is probably what gives it its evergreen quality.

Any thoughts beyond that?

Overall I think *Blade Runner* is a remarkable, worthy motion picture, made under very difficult circumstances. To the extent that I am able, I am proud of it.

➤ The second edition of *Future Noir: The Making Of Blade Runner*, by Paul M. Sammon, is available from Orion in late 2007.